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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: KOSOVO INDEPENDENCE

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage February 26 on the March presidential poll and the UN referendum; on the rise of Taiwan's stock index and the recent appreciation of the New Taiwan Dollar; and on the 80th Academy Awards held in Los Angeles Sunday. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" front-paged an exclusive news story saying that the U.S. military has recommended that Taiwan seek help through the U.S.-Taiwan mutual legal assistance agreement (MLAA) in order to remain abreast of the ongoing investigation of the Chinese espionage case in the United States. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "Liberty Times" editorial discussed Kosovo's recent declaration of independence and said that Kosovo's is a "general case," not a special case [as the U.S. and other countries have said], for countries and peoples suffering from oppression. An editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post," however, said "Beijing should learn from Serbia's non-violent approach toward Kosovo's independence move." End summary.

A) "Kosovo Independence Is a General Case, Not a Special One"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] editorialized (2/26):

"... The most noteworthy case is the United States. Washington is one of the key players that have immediately acknowledged Kosovo's nation-founding move; it did so even at the risk of offending Russia. Yet in her statement recognizing Kosovo's independence, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice added superfluously that Kosovo is a special case which cannot be seen as a precedent for other [similar] situations in the world now. Rice cited the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, the history of ethnic cleansing and serious crimes against civilians in Kosovo to emphasize that Kosovo's situation is unique. What Rice did not mention was that, when it comes to Kosovo's independence, the United States' major concern was that a majority of the Albanians in Kosovo are Muslim, so Washington's immediate recognition of Kosovo was a gesture of goodwill toward the Islamic world. What is of equal importance is that, since both Russia and China are facing calls for independence inside their countries, the United States did not want to irritate excessively these two countries that are the strongest opponents of Kosovo's independence. In any case, each country has its unique situation. There is still a chance for other territories seeking independence to pave the way toward their goals, as long as they can unite their strength against other countries' [opposition], and as long as it meets the United States' strategic interests. ... Based on this, Kosovo's internal solidarity and strong will are essential factors for Taiwan on the latter's road to resist China's annexation. Kosovo's eventual independence should be viewed as a general case, not a special one, for countries and peoples that are under oppression."

B) "Kosovo a Lesson for Beijing"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post"
[circulation: 30,000] editorialized (2/26):

"... Beijing has consistently declared that negotiation and dialogue, not unilateral action, is the correct way to resolve the Kosovo issue. China has a panoply of diplomatic, political and economic means to peacefully induce the people of Taiwan to embrace a relationship with China. Serbia, in contrast, lacks even a fraction of this economic influence over Kosovar Albanians. Still, the Serbian renunciation of violence to retain Kosovo offers lessons for Beijing.

"With the possibility that the next president in Taiwan will look more favorably on the mainland, it is suggested that Beijing should look at new ways to encourage Taipei to reconsider its push for independence. For instance, Beijing could scale back the number of flights that its jetfighters regularly make over the Strait, announce a freeze in its military buildup across it, and declare a freeze on the manufacture of new missiles and on deployment of new units to launch them. In the world today, there are about 2,000 nationalities in 200 loose states and 20 broadly homogenous nation-states. The emergence of Kosovo as an independent country provides an example, which can contribute to a new, peaceful paradigm for China and Taiwan. Dialogue and renunciation of violence will better serve China's interests in ensuring a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue. Beijing should learn from Serbia's non-violence approach toward Kosovo's independence move."

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